

Virginia Emergency Operations Center (VEOC)

Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM)

DROUGHT AND BURN BAN SITUATION REPORT # 24 27 June 2008, 1500 Hours

New Information in Bold Italic Type

SUMMARY

Statewide precipitation for the previous water year (1 October 2006 through 30 September 2007) was below normal. Statewide precipitation for the period from October 1, 2006 until **June 20, 2008** was below normal. ***Statewide precipitation for the period from January 1, 2008 through June 20, 2008 was in the normal range and the period June 1 through June 20 was characterized by very dry conditions in areas in the southern portion of the Commonwealth (south of Interstate 64) and resulted in below normal statewide precipitation.*** Precipitation greater than 85% of normal is considered to be in the normal range.

EXECUTIVE ACTION

EOC Activation: The Virginia Emergency Operations Center is at Routine Operations.

State of Emergency: Governor Timothy M. Kaine declared a Statewide Emergency on 18 October 2007 and imposed a statewide ban on all open burning. The statewide ban on open burning was lifted by Governor Timothy M. Kaine on 15 November. The Statewide Emergency remains in effect to deal with potential or actual drought related issues.

Governor Kaine requested that the Secretary of the US Department of Agriculture declare Virginia a statewide disaster area due to reductions in farm production caused by drought and high temperatures in 2007. 93 counties and 34 independent cities received a Department of Agricultural Secretarial disaster designation in 2007 as primary natural disaster areas. York and Arlington counties and the independent cities of Alexandria, Bristol, Falls Church, Poquoson and Norton were named contiguous disaster areas.

Governor Kaine sent a letter to all localities dated 29 November 2007 advising them that the most effective water restrictions are those developed at the local level and asked that localities review their drought water conservation and contingency plans associated with public waterworks and if there was no current drought plan, one should be developed. Governor Kaine also asked localities to review their local ordinances requiring mandatory non-essential water use restrictions during declared emergencies and assure that the ordinances are consistent with the Virginia Drought Assessment and Response Plan and if the locality has not adopted such ordinances, they should consider the development and adoption of these. The potential for the Commonwealth to experience drought impacts this summer remains significant and a forum was held 2 June 2008, at the Library of Virginia to address water conservation and drought topics. DEQ – [COV Drought Response Plan](#)

Executive Order: [Executive Order 57 \(2007\)](#)

WEATHER FORECAST

Friday, 27 June: Partly to mostly cloudy; 30% chance of scattered showers and thunderstorms in the afternoon and evening; daytime high temperatures upper 80's to upper 90's; overnight low temperatures mid 60's to mid 70's; west-southwest winds 5-15 MPH.

Virginia Emergency Operations Center (VEOC)

Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM)

Saturday, 28 June: Mostly cloudy; 40% chance of showers and thunderstorms in the afternoon and evening; daytime high temperatures mid 80's to mid 90's; overnight low temperatures mid 60's to low 70's; west-southwest winds 5-15 MPH.

OPERATIONS SECTION

ESF 1 – Transportation: Temporary waivers of registration and license requirements for carriers transporting emergency supplies of hay or animal feed expired on June 15, 2008

ESF 3 – Public Works & Engineering: Virginia Department of Health has not reported any impacts to public water supplies that have compromised their ability to provide the needs of their customers. **26 systems remain on water conservation measures; 4 remain on mandatory water conservation and 22 remain on voluntary water conservation requirements.**

Waterworks are encouraged to develop water conservation and contingency plans and local governments are encouraged to adopt local water conservation ordinances. [DEQ Water Conservation Tips](#)

ESF 4 – Firefighting: *Department of Forestry reports that increasing drought intensity has resulted in an increase in the number of lightning caused wildfires over the last two weeks. Since the beginning of the second week of June, the agency has responded to 34 wildfires which have burned just over 900 acres. The agency has also provided assistance to 7 other significant fires on federal lands in Virginia, all caused by lightning. Although lightning is normally only responsible for around 1 % of the wildfires in Virginia in a given year, dry forest fuel conditions caused by an extended period of less than normal rainfall makes conditions much more favorable for lightning caused wildfires. The agency expects this trend to continue until significant rainfall can return fuel moisture levels into the normal ranges. The agency is fully prepared to respond to the developing summertime fire situation in the Commonwealth and is not expecting a significant change in the current situation anytime in the near future. Since January 1, 2008, 1051 wildfires burned 26,258 acres, and damaged or destroyed 15 homes and 44 other structures. These numbers are well above 5 and 10 year averages for the period. The most intense single day of wildfire activity in the preceding 70 years occurred on February 10, 2008. During this event wildfires driven by unusually high winds were reported in 62 localities across the Commonwealth. There were 357 reported fires that burned almost 14,000 acres, and damaged or destroyed 9 homes, 19 other structures and 7 vehicles. [VDOF Fire Summation Report 26 June 08](#)*

ESF 5 – Emergency Management: VDEM posting event related items to WebEOC under event titled "WebEOC, 2007-10 Drought and Burn Ban"; Participating as member of the Drought Monitoring Task Force; assessing the impact across the Commonwealth; **limited exemption of hours worked for hay and feed carriers expired 15 June 2008.** VDEM Operations Director, Harry Colestock, and VDEM Recovery and Mitigation Director, George Roarty, attended a North Carolina Emergency Management Forum in Asheville, North Carolina, that discussed the drought in the Southeastern US. Points discussed for North Carolina were:

- Description of a tiered system to identify water systems vulnerability to drought and a group of functional state task forces to address specific drought issues
- State actions included water basin meetings, tracking of public water system status and promotion of conservation (especially industries and big users).
 - Governor told the state's 30 most vulnerable communities that they need to take actions now to ensure adequate water during the potential summer drought
 - Governor directed his Dept of Natural Resources to quickly identify the funding needed to make sure undue amounts of water are not being lost to leaks and other structural problems
 - Governor also requested that public water systems adopt conservation-based rate structures to encourage both residential and commercial customers to save water

Virginia Emergency Operations Center (VEOC)

Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM)

- Virginia's plans and current efforts were discussed and included background of recent droughts, development of the Virginia Drought Assessment and Response Plan, current drought impacts, Governor's Emergency Declaration, resources in readiness, water system problems exacerbated by drought and potential funding and other resources to mitigate the impacts of the drought situation.

ESF 11 – Agriculture and Natural Resources: Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services reported that according to the USDA Crop Weather Report **released on June 16, 2008, 92% of topsoil moisture ranged from adequate to surplus. Despite scattered showers this week, most of Virginia continued to suffer from drought stress. Early May produced adequate rainfall for planting and establishment of new crops. However, the unusually warm weather near the end of May and the extreme heat over the last few weeks have caused considerable concern for the new crops. Corn is perhaps the crop most in need of rainfall. The corn crop improved slightly in areas that experienced the recent light showers. However, twisting and drought stress has slowed growth. Pastures in the Southeastern portions of the state are also very dry. While recent weather has been perfect for wheat harvesting, many growers are very concerned that without rainfall in the next few days we could see another year of significant agricultural drought issues.** As a result of the hay shortages caused by the drought, the Virginia Tobacco Indemnification and Community Revitalization Commission has allocated \$500,000.00 to livestock producers in the Southwest Virginia counties of Bland, Buchanan, Carroll, Dickenson, Grayson, Lee, Scott, Smyth, Tazewell, Washington, Wise, and Wythe. All Virginia localities have access to federal drought disaster assistance. **Recent rains temporarily swelled small streams, creeks and rivers, but water levels quickly returned to below normal indicating low ground water levels. Southwest Virginia producers report that creeks and rivers are lower than they were late last summer. Shenandoah County cautioned its citizens to conserve well water since very little refill has occurred over the winter months.** [VDACS Drought Related Information](#); [VDACS Hay Clearing House](#)

Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries reports that boat ramps are all open with the exception of those closed for renovation or repairs. **The trout stocking program suffered from low flows in 2007 that resulted in smaller and fewer fish produced at the Department's hatcheries. The spring 2008 rainfall events provided good flows for stocking and fishing, and the hatcheries are in full production with next years fish. Additional rainfall events in the near future are needed to insure continued recreation and fish production through the summer. The intensity of drought impacts has increased during the last month due to a relatively short period of record high temperatures coupled with below normal rainfall. The lower than normal ground water levels, especially in the western portions of the Commonwealth, have resulted in very rapid decreases in streamflows. These below normal streamflows raise concerns regarding future reservoir conditions, especially in the western half of the Commonwealth. It should also be noted that the areas that are currently experiencing drought conditions in western Virginia are the same areas that experienced the greatest agricultural drought impacts last year.** It is important to remember that localized drought impacts, particularly agricultural drought impacts, are a normal occurrence in an "average" Virginia summer.

Virginia Department of Environmental Quality chairs the Virginia Drought Monitoring Task Force and reports **the latest NOAA drought monitor indicates intensification of drought conditions in the western and southern portions of the Commonwealth during the last month. Currently almost 25% of the Commonwealth is experiencing drought conditions, a three fold increase since May 19. The NOAA seasonal drought outlook through September 2008 indicates that drought conditions are likely to persist in southwest Virginia. Ground water levels in the vast majority of dedicated monitoring wells have shown decreases in water levels in the last month due to a relatively short period of very high temperatures and low precipitation. Levels of most large reservoirs have remained**

Virginia Emergency Operations Center (VEOC)

Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM)

near normal over the last month but inflows have dropped significantly, especially for those reservoirs located in the western half of the Commonwealth.

Although overall most major reservoirs are full or near full, inflows are declining precipitously in the south central and south west part of the state. Water levels are starting to fall at rates that are cause for concern this early in the summer. The watershed of Smith Mountain Lake is probably the driest basin in the state at the current time. A stakeholder's conference call on lake and river levels was held on June 19, 2008 to discuss the situation. No action was taken other than to set a meeting again on June 30, 2008. Further upstream in the very dry Roanoke River watershed, Carvins Cove and Spring Hollow Reservoirs, the water supply for much of the Roanoke area, are at 84 and 87 per cent of useable storage capacity, respectively, which is adequate for this time of year but represents a notable decrease in storage over the last thirty days. Philpott Lake, also in the driest part of the State, is 1.4 feet below the guide curve at the start of the recreation season. This lake will continue to Fall below the guide curve unless the Corps of Engineers decides to intervene and reduce power production from this project. Kerr Reservoir has fallen two feet so far this month but is still about 0.4 feet above guide curve. The release decision is made on a weekly basis following discussions with a drought monitoring work group. Further north in the State things are better, Lake Anna is full. The Lake Moomaw project in the headwaters of the James is 93% full. The often vulnerable Rivanna Water and Sewer Authority system is 99% full. [US Drought Monitor - VA: US Seasonal Drought Outlook: USGS Water Watch-Drought: DMTF Drought Status Report 23 June 2008](#)

ESF 15 – External Affairs: Public Affairs Officers from VDEM, Department of Environmental Quality, Department of Forestry and Department of Health and representatives from VDH Office of Drinking Water developed and presented a comprehensive state communication plan to the Drought Monitoring Task Force and are incorporating recommendations into the plan, prior to submission for final approval.

PLANNING SECTION

Situation/Documentation Unit: Monitoring situation and issuing monthly situation reports. **Next Situation Report will be issued Thursday, 24 July 2008.**

Prepared by: Michael Gray, Plans Section Chief
Authority of Michael Cline, State Coordinator
/s/ Harry Colestock, Operations Director